

## Storm Water Strategy

### *Reclaiming Storm Water as a Resource to Improve Water Quality and Quantity*

Storm water runoff has historically been seen as a threat to human life, and property -- if not properly managed. In addition, storm water, or urban runoff, remains a significant source of water quality pollution for many urban communities throughout the state. Despite these challenges, storm water hold promise today, and for future generations, as a viable source of water to sustain the state's anticipated continued population growth.

The State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) revisited its mission in this area, to lead the evolution of storm water management in California for the next century and beyond. The Board is advancing the perspective that storm water has value, supporting policies for collaborative watershed-level storm water management, addressing obstacles, developing resources, and integrating regulatory and non-regulatory interests. This effort will require participation and support by the public, stakeholders, and communities where storm water management remains a challenge.

### **Storm Water Management Required a Revisit**

The urgent need to protect water quality from storm water impairment, compounded by the severe impacts of drought and climate change, compels immediate action to preserve California's water resources.

The [California Water Action Plan](#), released in January 2014, called for multiple benefit storm water management solutions and more efficient permitting programs. As a result, in April 2014, the State Water Board formed a team of State Water Board and Regional Water Board staff (Initiative Team) to develop a Storm Water Strategic Initiative to guide the Water Board's Storm Water Program for at least the next ten years. From this initial effort evolved the Storm Water Strategy Team in September 2015, composed of State Water Board staff in the Storm Water Planning Unit, along with Regional Board staff and Executive Management sponsors. In addition, this effort captures a number of climate change adaption efforts by the state and regional water boards to prepare for the impacts of climate change in California.

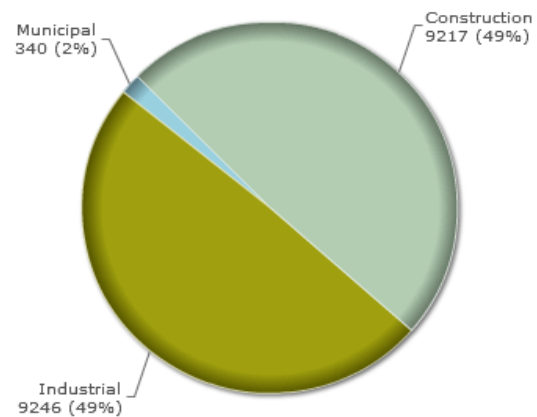
### **Background**

Storm water, also known as urban runoff, can be a significant source of water quality pollution. Storm water runoff is diffuse, episodic, and varies greatly depending on magnitude and frequency of storms. Storm water runoff contains pollutants that accumulate during dry weather. Urban development of impermeable surfaces has increased the volume and velocity of storm water runoff carrying pollutants to local water bodies.

The State Water Board and Regional Water Quality Control Boards (Regional Water Boards) identify the sources of pollutants that threaten the quality of the State's waters, and regulate

dischargers of storm water through National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits. NPDES storm water permits address runoff from industrial and construction sites as well as municipalities. The data shown below, from the [Water Boards' Annual Performance Report](#), highlight the total NPDES storm water facilities regulated in California during fiscal year 2014-15.

Regional Offices	Construction	Industrial	Municipal	Total
1	239	347	3	589
2	1,449	1,341	83	2,873
3	654	453	2	1,109
4	1,520	2,642	101	4,263
5F	785	442	7	1,234
5R	171	204	0	375
5S	1,115	1,084	21	2,220
5 all.	2,071	1,730	28	3,829
6A	92	33	3	128
6B	310	190	2	502
6 all.	402	223	5	630
7	276	172	13	461
8	1,461	1,564	63	3,088
9	1,145	774	42	1,961
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9,217</b>	<b>9,246</b>	<b>340</b>	<b>18,803</b>



## Program History

The Storm Water Strategy is founded on the results of the Storm Water Strategic Initiative, which served to direct the State Water Board's role in storm water resource management and evolve the Storm Water Program by a) developing guiding principles to serve as the foundation of the storm water program, b) identifying issues that support or inhibit the program from aligning with the guiding principles, and c) proposing and prioritizing projects that the Water Boards could implement to address those issues.

The Initiative Team released a [concept paper](#) and met extensively with stakeholders to understand their interests and solicit ideas on how to proceed. The result was the Storm Water Strategic Initiative Proposal ([Proposal](#)).

The [Proposal](#) identified the goals, challenges, and actions needed for the State Water Board and Regional Water Boards to continue to improve the regulation, management and utilization of California's storm water resources for multi-benefit approaches that achieve tangible results for improved water quality and supply.

The Proposal was posted for public review and comment on June 25, 2015. On Aug. 19, 2015, the State Water Board held a public workshop to discuss the Proposal and receive public feedback. Many commenters supported the concept that storm water should be considered a valuable resource. Overall, the State Water Board was encouraged by the scope of the Proposal and program objectives, but they requested that a more strategic implementation plan be developed with refined and consolidated projects.

## **The Strategy to Optimize Resource Management of Storm Water**

Following the Proposal review at the public workshop, State Water Board staff created a strategy-based document called the Strategy to Optimize Resource Management of Storm Water (STORMS). STORMS includes a program vision, mission, goals, objectives, projects, timelines, and consideration of the most effective integration of project outcomes into the Water Boards' Storm Water Program.

## **Strategy Goals**

The Goals in STORMS are based on the Guiding Principles created by the Initiative Team in the Proposal, and are intended to focus and guide the efforts of the Storm Water Strategy. Based on stakeholder input, STORMS includes the following four goals:

1. Change the perspective of storm water as a waste or hazard, and treat it as a valuable water resource;
2. Manage storm water to preserve watershed processes and achieve desired water quality outcomes;
3. Implement efficient and effective regulatory programs; and
4. Collaborate to solve water quality and pollutant problems with an array of regulatory and non-regulatory approaches.

## **Current Progress**

On January 6, 2016, the State Water Board adopted a resolution approving STORMS as a strategy document to guide the Storm Water Program for the next ten years. State Water Board staff are currently initiating nine projects as Phase I of STORMS project implementation.

*Coming soon:* Staff are in the process of creating an interactive “living document” version of STORMS, which will include project updates and links to relevant storm water studies and news. The living document will be available on the [Storm Water Strategy webpage](#) when completed in February 2016.

For more information visit the State Water Board's [Storm Water Strategy webpage](#) or contact Noelle Patterson, [Noelle.Patterson@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:Noelle.Patterson@waterboards.ca.gov).

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